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Nixon's Book Offers Interesting Sidelights

SIX CRISES by Richard M. Nixon. Doubleday. \$5.95.

The former vice president explores six particularly tough situations he faced during eight years in the Eisenhower administration.

Much like the man himself, the book has an aura of apologism and half-truth. Many of the statements are unclear and some of them have been discredited since the publication of the book.

But, even with those shortcomings, students of political science and amateur politicians alike should find Nixon's book a valuable addition to the library. If for no other reason, it relates some interesting sidelights to a controversial political career.

The portion that's most defensive is the one that describes the Cuban crisis and the stand Nixon took on Castro during the 1960 presidential campaign.

Nixon says he became enraged at John F. Kennedy only once during the campaign. That was when Kennedy called for a stronger stand against Cuba and — says

Nixon — put him in a corner.

Kennedy, claims Nixon, was briefed by the C.I.A. and other agencies on the impending and ultimately ill-fated invasion of Cuba.

Nixon declares that he himself was the strongest advocate of a get tough with Cuba stand in the Eisenhower administration, but complains that Kennedy stole his thunder and was unethical in pumping for same. Subsequently, officials in authority in the Cuban fiasco have denied that J.F.K. was given the inside facts in the deal.

This is one of the six "crises" Nixon discusses.

The others:

The Alger Hiss case . . . which catapulted Nixon to national fame.

The political fund scandal of '52 . . . when Nixon gave his famous "Checkers" speech and defended his political fund-raising friends.

Visit to Caracas . . . where crowds stoned and spat upon him.

Eisenhower's "heart attack" . . . when he faced a choice of providing leadership without usurping authority that wasn't his.

The Soviet Union tour . . . when he debated with Khrushchev in the kitchen.

The average newspaper reader already knows much about Nixon's crises but the book's saving factor is that it provides some juicy tidbits in the sidelights.

In the political arena, Nixon decries Nelson Rockefeller's refusal to take second place on the G.O.P. ticket in 1960. He also raps the Republican Convention for not "facing reality" and "considering the need for greater tactical accommodation."

He also goes into such things as the reason he looked haggard during the first TV debate with Kennedy while the Democratic appeared young and vigorous. Boiled down, it appears Kennedy has a better television "color" than does Nixon.

Strangely, Nixon doesn't dwell long enough on the Hiss Case (one area that hasn't been sufficiently explored recently) or the embarrassing Caracas visit. In all his controversial career, these appear to be the encounters where he showed his better side.

Over-all, I found it difficult to erase the image of Nixon as the apologist; never the bold, aggressive statesman as he evidently pictures himself.

However, there are many things to be admired in the book and the greatest of these is the insight he gives into the constant pressures that confront all national political figures.

—Ernest Thompson